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# CONTEMPORARY BRITISH POETRY AND THE SENSES OF PLACE

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The concept of a 'sense of place' marks a significant intersection between the critical vocabularies of literary studies and cultural geography, though in practice its content can be difficult to define. It may therefore be productive to examine the relationship between 'sense' and 'place' in a fairly literal manner, before proceeding to their metaphorical correlations. In this essay, the phrase 'senses of place' refers to the manifold ways in which the five senses are engaged not just in passively apprehending but actively making places, and in making sense of the worlds in which they take place. In particular, I want to examine how some examples of contemporary British poetry negotiate the (at least) double meaning of 'sense' by articulating both perceptions and conceptions, embodied and cognitive engagements with place.<sup>1</sup>

Sensory perceptions are at once fundamental to any geographical awareness and crucial to the aesthetic dimensions of literature, poetry in particular. Referring to poetry's function as an art of making, Susan Stewart contends that *poiēsis* as figuration relies on the senses of touching, seeing, and hearing that are central to the encounter with the presence of others, the encounter of recognition between persons'.<sup>2</sup> Of course, such encounters necessarily occur in places, and 'lyric synaesthesia' – poetry's capacity to combine and co-ordinate between different sensory registers – offers a supple means of working through the relations between inside and outside, self and world.<sup>3</sup> 'Sense' is both a material encounter within the world and an act of understanding directed towards that world. It implies physical proximity and mental distance simultaneously. If this duality is crucial to art's close alliance with *aisthēsis*, the whole complex of bodily sensations and the impressions they leave, then it is also at the heart of what Paul Rodaway calls 'geographical perception'. 'Geographical perception,' he explains, 'is simply the perception of a world around us, of spatial

relationships and the identification of distinctive places – to recognise our situation in a world and to have a sense of a world.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary, then, to have a sense of a world in order to identify distinctive places – to have a sense of place – and that ‘sense’ is irreducibly multiple.

A sense of a world and a sense of place; aesthetic sensibilities and geographical perceptions: these are the broad parameters within which I propose to read texts by four contemporary British poets: Alice Oswald, Thomas A. Clark, Jo Shapcott and Zoë Skoulding. Although my focus is not exclusively upon Welsh writing in English, however broadly defined, I will highlight the significance of Welsh landscapes and environments for the senses of place articulated in the poetry of both Shapcott and Skoulding.<sup>5</sup> Oswald’s and Clark’s respective representations of Dartmoor and the Scottish Highlands will, I hope, offer illuminating points of comparison within a wider context that is designated ‘British’ in chiefly geographical, rather than political, terms.

## Senses of place

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Although widely employed, the precise meaning of the phrase ‘sense of place’ remains ill-defined and ambiguous, albeit in potentially productive ways. For instance, it is not always clear whether a sense of place should be understood as inhering in the place itself, as a quality or attribute to be apprehended, or if it describes a distinctive attitude or sensibility on the part of human inhabitants. Noting its derivation from the Latin *genius loci* – the spirit or divinity of a particular place – John Brinckerhoff Jackson interprets sense of place as describing ‘the *atmosphere* to a place, the *quality* of its environment’.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, Edward Relph conceives it as ‘an innate faculty, possessed in some degree by everyone, that connects us to the world’.<sup>7</sup> In the discourse of humanist geography, then, a sense of place appears to oscillate somewhere between objective property and subjective experience. The ambiguity of the concept also brings into relief some fundamental differences in the way that place is construed. For Yi-Fu Tuan, individual human experience is paramount, and the ‘concrete reality’ of place emerges from a ‘total’ experience combining sensory perceptions and mental reflection.<sup>8</sup> Any such ‘elemental sense of place’ also rests upon the assumption that place is stable, bounded and familiar;

as ‘an organized world of meaning’, place is ‘essentially a static concept’.<sup>9</sup> However, for Doreen Massey, Tuan’s neat dichotomies between space and place, and place and time, simply cannot hold. Because places necessarily change over time they are not fixed environments but processes, ‘*spatio-temporal events*’; and a ‘global sense of place’ entails grasping place in terms of its relations with what lies beyond it, as ‘a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus’.<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, then, place manifests itself as static and intimately closed; and on the other, it is always in process, inherently open-ended in time and space.

These sharply contrasting conceptions of place each also find their articulation in critical accounts of the poetry of place. For instance, Seamus Heaney’s essay, ‘The sense of place’, exemplifies Tuan’s observation that literature’s role is ‘to give visibility to intimate experiences, including those of place’.<sup>11</sup> For Heaney, place is most often the first place of home and provides a steady anchorage in the world, offering not just a context for the poetic imagination but also emotional sustenance. Drawing a distinction between conscious and unconscious ways of knowing place, he prioritizes the latter, commending Wordsworth for articulating ‘the nurture that becomes available to the feelings through dwelling in one dear perpetual place’.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, he contends that the Irish ‘*sensing* of place’ is distinctively ‘sacramental’, construing the Irish landscape – countryside rather than city – as a cryptic fabric of signs instinct with spiritual significance.<sup>13</sup> In Heaney’s quasi-religious aesthetic, then, place provides an essential grounding for the poetic sensibility, and it is to ‘the stable element, the land itself, that we must look for continuity’.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the poet’s relation to place is one of sedentary belonging, dwelling in (and on) place. Although his later work has to an extent moved beyond this equation of place with continuity, and is more likely to speak of ‘the place of writing’, the formulation Heaney advances has been influential.<sup>15</sup> It is taken up, for instance, in a more explicitly Heideggerian register by John Burnside, who contends that lyric poetry ‘centres a human being in his or her world in a spiritual way’ and that writing entails ‘the search for an appropriate manner of dwelling upon the earth’.<sup>16</sup>

The ethical and environmental concerns that Burnside broaches here and elsewhere in his work are important factors informing the sense of place in contemporary poetry, but the emphasis he places on

centring, dwelling and spiritual presence is not so widely shared by his peers. More often, it is experiences of transit, decentring and flux that are foregrounded in contemporary poets' conceptions of place. For example, Jo Shapcott explicitly rejects Heaney's method of grounding the poetic utterance in a known locale, looking instead to the exilic example of Elizabeth Bishop and determining 'to discover how to be a different kind of writer, for whom place and language are less certain, and for whom shifting territories are the norm'.<sup>17</sup> Shapcott's affirmation of uncertainty and shifting territories emphasizes not only movements in, through and between places but also the mutability of those places themselves, their dynamic constitution by historical and social processes. And this accords with a wider set of preoccupations that Eric Falcì identifies in post-war British and Irish poetry with 'dissolving landscapes, places that open underfoot into murky indeterminacies, and spaces made and unmade by modernity's alterations, accidents, and disasters'.<sup>18</sup>

However, if it is true that we inhabit a world in which displacements and indeterminacies appear to prevail, then does it still make sense to speak of a sense of place at all? Only, I contend, if we articulate 'sense' and 'place' in the rather literal manner that I am espousing here, for the richness and suggestiveness of contemporary poetic representations of place often resides in what Bertrand Westphal calls their 'polysensoriality'. In literary representations, Westphal observes, 'space is subject to the infinite variety of sensory perception' and texts may also challenge culturally and historically specific sensory hierarchies.<sup>19</sup> By doing so, they illustrate one of the key political functions of art, which for Jacques Rancière 'consists in suspending the normal coordinates of sensory experience', thereby recasting the delimitation of spaces and times, the visible and the audible that makes up 'the distribution of the sensible'.<sup>20</sup> A reconfigured sensorium entails new ways of apprehending, understanding and being in the world; it therefore also makes possible other senses of place.

## **Geographies of the senses**

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As the foregoing overview suggests, contemporary poetry of place has much in common with recent work in cultural geography that draws on post-Heideggerian phenomenology, post-structuralism and

non-representational theories. Such work typically foregrounds the contingencies of situated embodiment in place, and explores the processes and practices involved in the matter of things taking place. So, where humanist geographers emphasize the agency of the coherent human subject in perceiving place as a pre-existing object, recent work in cultural geography tends to foreground the 'multisensual engagements' through which both subject and object are constituted.<sup>21</sup> Here, firm distinctions between person and place, self and landscape are dissolved in a coruscating flux of movements, relations and becomings. According to Nigel Thrift, non-representational theory 'is concerned with thinking with the whole body' and seeks to 'valorise all the senses'.<sup>22</sup> Yet, that body is itself constantly in motion from one location to another, travelling 'paths that constantly intersect with those of others in a complex web of biographies'.<sup>23</sup> Cultural geographers also increasingly speak in terms of affects and percepts rather than feelings and sensations. As John Wylie explains, affects and percepts are 'domains of experience that are more-than-subjective' for they radically deconstruct the boundaries between interiors and exteriors, subjects and objects.<sup>24</sup> On this account, a sense of place would be neither a subjective faculty nor the property of an object but something that circulates between the two and plays a key role in creating selves and places as such.

Multi-sensual engagements are also central to Michel Serres's philosophy of mingled bodies, which conceives sense and place as intricately woven together.<sup>25</sup> In Serres's version of sensuous geography places, bodies and things are inescapably imbricated in one another, manifesting as skeins or fabrics of interlaced material forms. Place is defined not in terms of the borders that circumscribe it but by its capacity for associative connections, and is 'organized like a tied or untied knot, like a star or a living body'.<sup>26</sup> Serres also extolls the virtues of wandering or visiting, following complicated paths that weave together the diversity of places, the local and the global, in the bodily sensations of the wandering subject. The wanderer is thus a composite figure who 'accumulates in his [*sic*] body passages, landscapes, customs, languages and mixes them: . . . the mingled waters of all the rivers of the world beating in his veins'.<sup>27</sup> Far from abolishing place, the movements of weaving or knotting that characterize wandering as a mode of sensory involvement with the world have a creative function, for '[k]nots fashion places through which a thousand new knots

can be threaded'.<sup>28</sup> Given this proliferation of hybrid spaces and places, I am particularly interested to examine the role played by poetic language and form in revealing how such knots are tied or untied, thereby creating rich and intricate senses of place.

## Alice Oswald

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Serres's multi-sensual sense of place as a knot of entangled or unfurling relations seems appropriate to Alice Oswald's long poem *Dart* (2002), a bold experiment with sound and form which follows the course of its titular river from source to sea. Oswald's poem foregrounds the interactions that take place between water and land, nature and culture, human and non-human inhabitants of the Devon landscapes shaped and gathered by the Dart. It also affirms the plural, protean character of its fluid identities by having the river speak through a multitude of voices, including those of walkers and naturalists, poachers and bailiffs, canoeists, swimmers and seal-watchers, workers at dairies, sewage plants and woollen mills, netsmen and oyster-gatherers, woodsmen and water-nymphs, the living, the dead and the drowned. As Charles I. Armstrong observes, Oswald's river-poem describes 'a teeming manifold of existence' in which natural biodiversity coexists – albeit uneasily – alongside modern industrial processes, traditional crafts and the intrusions of leisure and tourism.<sup>29</sup> *Dart*'s intricately composed 'sound-map' is polyphonic and excessive, denying the reader any stable vantage point and instead immersing her in the river's 'many-headed turbulence' and fluctuating 'repertoire of murmurs'.<sup>30</sup> Though its patterns of words are fixed and distributed on the surface of the page, the poem's varied rhythms, registers and forms give the impression that it is constantly in motion, like the river itself, and impart a profoundly dynamic sense of place as a shifting context of collisions and confluences. In this, *Dart* seeks an 'interweaving form' that can approximate Oswald's understanding of landscape as 'a physical score' composed of 'weather, daylight, woods, all long unstable rhythms and dissonance'.<sup>31</sup> Its involved soundscape prioritizes material and physical modes of relating to place, through the body, the hands and the ears as much as the eye or the mind, in an effort to 'keep the poem open to the many-centred energies of the natural world'.<sup>32</sup> And yet, *Dart* is also acutely conscious of its own textuality, its status as a

cultural artefact that depends for its effects upon the mediating capacities of language, which necessarily defer any direct encounter with nature.

If, as Deryn Rees-Jones suggests, *Dart* can be read as ‘a dramatised autobiography of place’ then it is worth noting that the poem opens and closes with questions of identity that also problematize any sure sense of location.<sup>33</sup> ‘Who’s this moving alive over the moor?’ asks a voice that lacks clear attribution, receiving (or providing) the answer: ‘An old man seeking and finding a difficulty.’ The problem of disentangling one voice from another in these lines, or even deciding how many can be heard, is linked at the outset to the walker’s ‘difficulty’ in finding a way across Dartmoor’s ‘huge rain-coloured wilderness’.<sup>34</sup> The river’s origins are obscure and marshy, a ‘secret buried in reeds at the beginning of sound’, and the walker’s map ‘marked in red’ is no guarantee against disorientation:

through Broadmarsh,                      under Cut Hill,  
  
Sandyhole, Sittaford, Hartyland, Postbridge,  
  
Belever, Newtake, Dartmeet, the whole  
unfolding emptiness branching and reaching  
and bending over itself.<sup>35</sup>

Although the list of toponyms given in these lines implies a confident sense of emplacement, tracing the course of the East Dart downstream from high moors to the human settlements of Postbridge and Dartmeet, the cluster of active verbs that follow grant the landscape an unsettling agency and animation as its ‘emptiness’ ramifies and unravels in open space. Such volatility accords with the restless, shape-shifting character of the river itself, which is underlined explicitly at the poem’s close, as freshwater mingles with the salt sea beyond Dartmouth and Kingsweir:

who’s this moving in the dark? Me.  
This is me, anonymous, water’s soliloquy,  
  
all names, all voices, Slip-Shape, this is Proteus,  
whoever that is, the shepherd of the seals,  
driving my many selves from cave to cave . . .<sup>36</sup>



As in the poem's opening lines, movement and multiplicity make identification a slippery, uncertain business, whilst the final ellipsis refuses any conclusive resolution to the river's fluent metamorphoses. For Janne Stigen Drangsholt, this means that *Dart* presents a self that is 'flowing and semiotic, barely audible, and perhaps even indecipherable'.<sup>37</sup> This is a perceptive observation, though it is worth noting that Oswald does not elide the lyric subject altogether but rather multiplies the voices, signs and selves that are articulated together in the poem, written over, on and into one another.

A virtuoso act of ventriloquism, *Dart* combines local dialect words and the vocabularies of science, prose anecdotes and densely onomatopoeic riffs, gossip, rumour, ballad and myth. Thematically and formally, Oswald's text is preoccupied with the omnipresent, multiple sounds of the river and its inhabitants. On the moors, frogs' 'lovesongs' compete with 'the soundmarks of larks'; at Dartmeet the different idioms of the East and West Dart collide in a 'brawl of mudwaves'; the noise of looms at the mill is heard as 'a knocking throbbing bobbing hubbub'; and by Dartmouth the river's 'jostling procession of waters' figures as 'so many word-marks, momentary traces / in wind-script of the world's voices'.<sup>38</sup> Frequently, the river describes itself in language that is at once idiosyncratic and highly self-reflexive:

will you swim down and attend to this foundry for sounds

this jabber of pidgin-river  
drilling these rhythmic cells and trails of scales,  
will you translate for me blunt blink glint.<sup>39</sup>

Like the submerging swimmer, the reader is abruptly immersed in these lines' flux of internal and slant rhymes, consonantal patterns and irregular rhythms which both describe and mimic the manifold sounds that water makes. Such formal and aural complexity leads Peter Howarth to contend that Oswald's poem acts as 'a kind of tuning device, allowing us to hear the river's sounds in the language describing it'.<sup>40</sup> For instance, the jarring treble stress of 'blunt blink glint' provides an onomatopoeic 'translation' for the sounds of water on stone, though their shared consonants also allow each word to translate the others in a sliding substitution of letters. Oswald's clustered monosyllables deliberately disrupt the momentum of her verse, roughening its sonic

textures. Yet, at the same time, the very components of language itself appear to become fluid, entering into a slippery interplay of difference and repetition. As a 'foundry for sounds', the Dart's natural rhythms and energies are metaphorically entangled with industrial manufacture and poetic acts of making, its 'rhythmic cells' and 'trails of scales' mixing organic and cultural forms.

In keeping with lyric poetry's prioritization of voice and 'the pull of sound against sense', *Dart* accords particular significance to acts of listening as a means of engaging in and with place.<sup>41</sup> However, sounds are often felt or seen as much as they are heard, and the poem creates synaesthetic effects by playing variations on the river's condition as a metaphorical 'body' of water. During the water-nymph's song to the woodman, 'the river's eyes / peep and pry among the trees', its 'tongue flatters the ferns' and 'the bare feel of water' is registered by 'hollow hands'.<sup>42</sup> Later on, a stonewaller tells of how his boat connects him with 'the texture of things', granting intimate contact with the river's fluent skin, 'the grain, the drift of water which I couldn't otherwise get a hold on'.<sup>43</sup> As these examples suggest, Oswald attends particularly closely to the various kinds of manual labour that occur along the river's banks and the perspectives of those who make use of its natural resources, from sewage workers to crab fishermen. The poem ends, significantly, in a sea-cave redolent of 'the musky fishy genital smell / of things not yet actual', a place of births, movements and new beginnings.<sup>44</sup> Sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell all combine, then, in *Dart* to form 'the inexplicable knot of the river's body' that the reader may follow but not unravel.<sup>45</sup> Through her richly modulated variations on the Dart's protean corporeality, a body of water that 'flits and flows / and seeks and swerves and swiftly goes', Oswald also illustrates the fundamentally multi-sensual character of human and non-human senses of place.<sup>46</sup>

Oswald's poetry exhibits a nuanced awareness of the crucial role played by the body in mediating experiences of place, and of the human senses as interfaces between any notional inner self and the world outside. Gardening provides a key analogy for poetic encounters with the natural environment, particularly the sensuous physical involvement provided by the act of raking leaves. 'Raking,' she claims,

like any outdoor work, is a more mobile, more many-sided way of knowing than looking. When you rake leaves for a couple of

hours, you can hear right into the non-human world, it's as if you and the trees had found a meeting point in the sound of the rake.<sup>47</sup>

Once again, hearing is preferred to looking because it discloses a more intimate and complex sense of emplacement, of being embedded in a context that is shaped by and shapes the subject in turn. Outdoor work promotes an awareness of the interactions and interdependencies that persist between subjects and objects, human and non-human agents, the body and place. There is an important ontological dimension to such bodily sensibilities, for, as Edward S. Casey remarks, being is synonymous with being somewhere, being-in-place, and 'it is by our bodies that we belong to the place-world'.<sup>48</sup> Through the dimensions, orientations and capabilities of our bodies we are not only *in* place, but *part of* it as well. Oswald's account of raking leaves also underlines the extent to which the body's relations to place and environment are essentially dynamic, predicated on actions, movements and sensory encounters that are experienced as events. If, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty contends, 'the body is our anchorage in the world' then it is only by way of 'the momentum of existence' that the 'intersensory unity' of that world becomes available to perception.<sup>49</sup> Working and walking, wandering and wayfaring: the body's movements in space unsettle sedentary notions of phenomenological embodiment, connecting being-in-the-world with acts of becoming and the active processes of taking place.

## Thomas A. Clark

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In the poetry of Thomas A. Clark walking is a primary means of multi-sensual engagement with the landscapes and coastlines of the Scottish Highlands, frequently figuring as both theme and trope. Indeed, many of Clark's texts can be read as examples of what Roger Gilbert calls 'walk poems', texts that are 'able to evoke in the very spacing of the verse the rhythm of a trajectory punctuated by choice, pausing in one place or leaping ahead as the moment dictates'.<sup>50</sup> Clark tends to write short sequences of poems focused upon, and often named after, particular places – 'Beinn Fuar', 'Riasg Buidhe', 'At Loch Grinneabhat', 'Creag Liath' – where the wayward paths taken by the poet-speaker provide opportunities for observation, reflection and an

acute attentiveness to ordinary things. Robert Stacey notes that Clark's poems typically 'bear witness to the holiness of the commonplace and the here-and-now'.<sup>51</sup> And Clark has commented in interview on the importance of walking as an activity that 'literally puts me in touch with my surroundings', encouraging a mode of 'attention' and 'openness' to the world.<sup>52</sup> The role of sensory perception in such attitudes is crucial, and the kinaesthetic properties of walking typically facilitate encounters with the particular sights, sounds, smells and even tastes that combine in a given place. Thus, in his prose poem, 'In Praise of Walking', Clark writes: 'For the right understanding of landscape, information must come to the intelligence from all the senses'; and in 'Tobar Na Cailleach' a walk in the mountains brings the speaker to a place where 'the air is so clear that looking is a kind of tasting'.<sup>53</sup> Sense is made, in the first place, from the manifold data of the body's senses, and it is through walking that such a holistic, intrinsically plural sense of place becomes possible. Yet, whilst Clark's poetry is profoundly peripatetic on a thematic or narrative level, its tonal qualities and delicate formal composition imply stasis and a sort of zen-like calm. Poetry is returned to its basic function as an art of making and the poem is conceived as 'an objective thing' with a life and shape of its own, as words arranged in lines and stanzas framed by the white spaces of the page.<sup>54</sup> Clark's foregrounding of what Martin Heidegger calls 'the thingly aspect of the art work' is further apparent in the fact that so many of his texts are published as pamphlets by small presses, including his own Moschatel Press, on fine paper and often featuring illustrations by visual artists.<sup>55</sup> Yet, the opposition between form and content that is apparent here opens onto a deeper affinity. For, just as the formal structure of Clark's poetic sequences generate connections and a sense of narrative momentum from apparently isolated verbal fragments, so the movements of their poet-speakers in and through the landscape are measured and leisurely, punctuated at regular intervals by moments of rest and contemplation.

For Clark, walking entails indirection and an attitude of receptivity that is, as far as possible, without preconceptions, ready to meet with what 'exists outside ourselves and our preoccupations'.<sup>56</sup> It welcomes the prospect of getting lost, of making new discoveries whilst moving through places rather than travelling the shortest distance between two points. In this regard, his walk poems accord with Tim Ingold's description of 'wayfaring' as a spatial practice that 'couples

locomotion and perception'.<sup>57</sup> Ingold defines wayfaring by contrast with 'transport': where the latter prioritizes the mechanics of getting from A to B as rapidly as possible, negating any active engagement with the landscapes traversed, the former is a mode of inhabiting places in which travel leads to sensuous involvement rather than alienation. Accordingly, the wayfarer experiences place not as 'a node in a static network of connectors' but as 'a knot tied from multiple and interlaced strands of movement and growth'.<sup>58</sup> This seems to describe the conditions and outlook informing Clark's ambulatory aesthetic very well, for his poems trace digressive, divagating journeys in the course of which a sense of place is woven from the body's multi-sensual capabilities.

Clark's most sustained and intricately interwoven poem of place to date is *The Hundred Thousand Places* (2009), a sequence that takes the form of a journey across the varied landscapes of the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles, following the changing seasons and the fluctuations of light from dawn to dusk. Travelling on foot 'without plan or intention', Clark's roving narrator follows fractal coastlines and forest paths, treads 'the deep / accumulations' of bogs and moorland, and climbs through 'a scree of resistances' to lonely mountain ridges.<sup>59</sup> He also notes the 'lovely particulars' of plants and wildflowers, birds and animals encountered along the way with the minute attentiveness of an amateur naturalist.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, Clark's language frequently adopts the register of painterly abstraction in which form, colour and shape are foregrounded. For instance, in the following cliff-top prospect:

green islands  
on blue seas  
blue lochans  
on green islands<sup>61</sup>

The chiasmus of these lines finds a verbal parallel for the delicate balance of colours and mutually enclosed shapes in the image composed, where land lies on water and water lies on land. The record of particulars is here recast in an abstract or objectivist mood, and many of Clark's minimalist lyrics seem to resonate with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's conception of the artwork as 'a bloc of sensations', 'a compound of percepts and affects' that are detached from, or in

excess of, any subjective experience. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, affects are the 'nonhuman becomings of man' and percepts the 'nonhuman landscapes of nature'.<sup>62</sup> Certainly, it is notable that the landscapes of *The Hundred Thousand Places* are unpeopled but by no means empty, and that place is conceived as an entanglement of human and non-human elements in which the latter predominate. The poem's title refers to the many long-abandoned settlements of the Scottish Highlands that have been partially reclaimed by the natural world – 'the dwellings / in ruins / the stones / given back' – and Clark's wandering subject also often seems to be on the point of merging with the environment through which he makes his way.<sup>63</sup>

Strikingly, the text avoids employing an I-persona throughout, opting instead for an ambiguous second-person address, and focuses on moments of absorption or involvement where the integrity of the lyric self is radically compromised. Following a winding path through wildflowers and long grasses, the protagonist is 'coloured / by events' and seems to disappear into the landscape itself: 'there where / you lose yourself / brightness / takes your place'.<sup>64</sup> And later on, whilst taking shelter in a pine wood he blends imperceptibly with its trees: 'sheltered / the one who / sought shelter / dissolves'.<sup>65</sup> Again and again, Clark's peripatetic subject is dispersed, displaced or self-divided by the immersive experience of moving in and through natural landscapes, retaining only an intermittent sense of autonomous selfhood. In a recurrent trope, the perceptive and affective dimensions of walking facilitate what John Wylie describes as a 'folding together of self and landscape', and of sensory perceptions with the things perceived.<sup>66</sup> Passing through the natural folds of a steep-sided glen, Clark's speaker goes 'on and on / deeper into green / led by implication'; and a change in the weather just as suddenly prompts a change in mood: 'as if you were implicated / the lifting of the mist / from the water'.<sup>67</sup> Such affective 'implications' – literally, twisting or folding things together – also extend to experiences of synaesthesia, as distinct sensory perceptions become conflated. For instance, listening figures as a means for the attentive wayfarer, perched on a cliff-top, to 'feel' his 'way out / into what might / wave or rock / take form', sensing the creative forces animating the landscapes he apprehends.<sup>68</sup> Later on in the sequence, Clark strikingly combines the distanced objectivity of looking with the embodied contacts of touch and movement:

as you look out  
over the hill shapes  
you feel your way  
over the hill shapes  
your eyes walk  
over the slopes<sup>69</sup>

In these lines, the landscape is not merely what can be seen, nor even a way of seeing, but rather a context that ‘shapes’ and conditions the speaker’s multi-sensual experiences. Indeed, throughout *The Hundred Thousand Places*, Clark’s poetry describes the mingled interplay of the body’s senses as a means to explore the complex implications of being-in-place, where subject and object, self and landscape are entangled with one another, if never simply identical.

## Jo Shapcott

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Non-human becomings are also an important feature of Jo Shapcott’s poetry, particularly her dramatic monologues in which the speaker is as likely to be an animal, vegetable or mythical creature as another human being. Shapcott is keenly attuned to the sensuous materiality of bodily existence – sometimes at the sub-atomic level – as well the body’s capacity for quicksilver metamorphoses. Like Clark, however, Shapcott’s interest in shifting or uncertain identities is also connected to her unsettled sense of place, which comes to the fore in ‘Gladestry Quatrains’ from *Tender Taxes* (2001). The twenty-nine poems of this sequence are loose ‘versions’ of Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Quatrains Valaisans* (1926), but substitute the hilly border country of mid Wales for Rilke’s lush Swiss landscapes and invent a distinctively ‘uneasy’ mode of pastoral, which has, ‘literally, an edgier feel’.<sup>70</sup> Much preoccupied with the phenomenology of borders and boundaries, edges and divisions, ‘Gladestry Quatrains’ also illustrates in a peculiarly concrete manner Alice Entwistle’s contention that Shapcott’s sense of place is ‘defined as much by absence as presence, and in its multiplicity never simply “one”’.<sup>71</sup> Shapcott herself has written of the imaginative potency that ‘[b]orders and edges of territory and language, home and body, land and water’ have for women writers in particular.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, her own border terrains are at once unsettled and unsettling, the locus

of psychological as well as historical and geographical frictions. Although family history links her speaker(s) to the places described, she often writes from the perspective of the incomer struggling to accommodate herself to a profoundly disorientating landscape, its unfamiliar topography, hybrid place-names and changeable weather. This is not to suggest that 'Gladestry Quatrains' fails to respond positively to such displacements, but rather that the sequence deepens the ambivalence of 'rootlessness and alienation' as thematic preoccupations in Shapcott's work.<sup>73</sup> Of particular interest is the fluid interplay that occurs between the body and the landscape, both of which are subject to recurrent metamorphoses, and the role played by the senses in mediating such exchanges.

'Gladestry Quatrains' responds to a sparsely populated area of the Wye Marches situated between Radnor Forest to the north and the Black Mountains to the south. It is a region of mixed farmland and heathery uplands, ruined Norman castles and working quarries, where the meandering line of the Powys/Herefordshire border is never more than a few miles away. Shapcott creates a pervasive sense of cultural ambivalence by naming individual poems in her sequence after villages, buildings and landscape features of the surrounding countryside, so that their very titles speak in the forked tongues of Welsh and English: 'Cefn Hir', 'Glascwm', 'Caety Traylow', but also 'Hanter Hill', 'Newchurch' and 'Huntington Castle'. In this regard, 'Gladestry Quatrains' illustrates Emily Hicks's point that 'to read a border text is to cross over into another set of referential codes', or rather to cross back and forth between the linguistic resources of at least two cultures.<sup>74</sup> A further layer of complexity is added to such border dialogues by virtue of the fact that Shapcott's texts are 'versions' of French poems written by a German poet during his stay in a multi-lingual region of Switzerland.

Jan Morris observes that the border between Wales and England often figures culturally as a stark line of division and difference, not just 'a demarcation between nations' but what 'feels like a frontier between States'.<sup>75</sup> However, Shapcott seems more interested in the shiftiness of this and other borders, their margins of errancy, overlap or confusion. Given that the sequence meanders freely back and forth across both the official frontier and the historic dividing line of Offa's Dyke, which runs very near to Gladestry itself, we might say that 'Gladestry Quatrains' is chiefly concerned with the boundaries of



place rather than the border separating two nations. According to Edward S. Casey, borders are ‘strictly determined and demarcated edges’ that properly belong to ‘sites’, whereas ‘places’ have boundaries that ‘exhibit a porosity and vagueness that allows them to be at once ever-changing and yet stable enough to serve as identifiable edges of places’.<sup>76</sup> Correspondingly, Shapcott’s poems reveal the boundaries of self, body and place to be flexible and osmotic, subject to the ramifications of change and chance at any moment.

In ‘Dolyhir’, for instance, the sound of rushing water from a hidden culvert sharpens the speaker’s awareness that ‘There is nothing frank about this landscape.’<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in ‘Wye Marches’ she complains that the Welsh border country, known to her forebears, escapes her understanding:

It keeps evading me, this border country,  
though my own grandfathers  
mined coal, coughed, spat  
and died not far away.

You round a corner and the hill  
has moved, the sky’s gone AWOL  
and the ancestors, muttering in another tongue  
have dug themselves even further in.<sup>78</sup>

In these lines, the speaker’s deliberate effort to understand or comprehend the land of her fathers is frustrated, and the border country around the Wye Valley is characterized as evasive, enigmatic, mercurial. Moreover, the disturbing mobility and changefulness of the landscape that constitutes the poem’s central conceit is paralleled by the shiftiness of its narrative voice, which has a tendency to switch perspectives and slip between pronouns, particularly across the stanza break. It is not just the place itself but also the place of the speaker’s ancestors in it that is rendered strange and unfamiliar, so that the family connection she might be supposed to feel across the generations is undermined by linguistic and class differences.

A similarly complex and ambiguous set of relationships is explored in ‘Llan’, which begins by wondering whether the ‘goddess of this place’ speaks Welsh, only to remark that: ‘There’s not much English / in her bright face.’ The Welshness of the place is both questioned and

(negatively) affirmed, whilst the goddess's existence remains open to doubt. The English speaker's dual status as incomer and inhabitant is performed via her ability to ventriloquize the 'border tongues' of her dead Welsh parents, but the use of the Welsh word 'cwm' in line six seems only half-convincing, and she reverts to the English 'valley' just a few lines later. A further, more far-reaching conflation occurs in the final stanza, which extends the metaphor of landscape-as-body already established by the earlier rhyming of 'place' with 'face':

The valley loves, it sleeps.  
Why should I enter its body,  
travel its capillaries,  
listen to its skin?<sup>79</sup>

Boundaries become thoroughly permeable in these lines in a way that troubles the demarcations between self and place, inside and outside. For, the self-questioning speaker not only imagines entering and travelling through the 'capillaries' of the valley's 'body', as corpuscle or virus, but also listening to its 'skin'. Shapcott's poem enacts what Rodaway calls a 'sensuous geography' by dramatizing 'an interaction with the environment both as given to the senses and as interpreted by the senses themselves in conjunction with the mind'.<sup>80</sup> Disorienting shifts of shape, focus and scale are made possible by the sensuous qualities of bodies that are at once human and geographical, and which fold together in ways that problematize some basic spatial distinctions.

The motif of bodily metamorphoses is a recurrent feature of 'Gladestry Quatrians' and its particular sense of place, which tends to foreground kinaesthetic, tactile and auditory experiences. As Vicki Bertram observes, Shapcott's poems are typically 'preoccupied with the feel, not the look, of things' and the body itself figures as 'a source of surprise'.<sup>81</sup> For instance, 'Gwaithla Brook' speaks in the voice of the titular stream itself, which revels in its capacity for fluent shifts and variations: 'I'm always cladding myself / in what's just undressed me.' Shapcott borrows the mythopoeic convention of granting water a sensuous female body but, like Oswald, undermines that body's material constancy by highlighting its liability to take 'flight' in a life that 'ripples' beyond any firm constraints.<sup>82</sup> A similarly radical sequence of metamorphoses occurs in 'Cefn Hir', which reverses the speaker's

initial perspective looking up from the valley floor towards the ‘the high pastures of angels’ in its second stanza:

Down the clear valley and right up to the ridge  
                   you can see yourself break  
 into fragments which float in the air: bird, mite,  
                   balloon, bat, RAF Hawk.<sup>83</sup>

Although the lofty perspective taken in these lines seems to imply the mastery of the eye, identified as it is with the scopic dominance of the military aircraft, this implication is qualified by the peculiar doubling and bodily disintegration that occurs in the act of looking down the valley (and back at oneself). The emphasis shifts from the resolved stasis of a visual panorama to the feel of things in accelerating motion, as the self imaginatively takes flight through a multitude of widely varying shapes and forms.

Shapcott’s thematic interest in metamorphosis is paralleled by the mutability of poetic form in ‘Gladestry Quatrains’, which plays restless variations on the basic template of the quatrain as a stanzaic unit. The play of repetition and variation that results, both within and across individual poems, is crucial to the sequence’s focused but ever-shifting figurations of place. For instance, ‘Caety Traylow’ describes a border landscape in which ‘everything changes’ as follows:

A precipice  
 on a border mountain  
  
 gives more certain footing  
                   than this spot where  
                   long grass displaces itself  
 overnight,   in wind, in rain  
  
 lies down under the clear air  
 as if stroked  
                   by the hand  
 which made it up.<sup>84</sup>

Frequent enjambements, lacunae, varied indentations and run-on lines all serve to unsettle the quatrain’s propensity to consistency and

resolution here, even as the basic formal structure is retained. Stanzas seem to writhe and contort on the page, and gaps spontaneously open up in the middle of individual lines, as if registering the shocks of displacement they describe, temporarily disrupting the momentum of this single, sinuous sentence. Shapcott's poem constantly threatens to overflow its own bounds in a formal tendency to excess that parallels the uncertain and conflicted sense of place that 'Gladestry Quatrains' as a whole communicates.

## Zoë Skoulding

Formal invention also combines with a fascination for borderlands and shifting territories in the poetry of Zoë Skoulding, particularly her third collection, *Remains of a Future City* (2008). Like Shapcott, Skoulding is attracted to the uncertain textures of rural and coastal landscapes in her adopted home of Wales, though she complicates their affective dimensions still further through conflation with the actual and imagined cityscapes of continental Europe. Her poems represent places as radically impure, meshworks of heterogeneous elements: rural and urban, natural and artificial, organic and inorganic, human and non-human, real and unreal. Moreover, for Skoulding, places are conceived as intrinsically relational, so that her poetry is 'just as likely to connect one place with another as to dig down through the depths of associations in a single location'.<sup>85</sup> This aesthetic of open connections often leads her to experiment with techniques of collage and juxtaposition, where distinct spatial images and vocabularies are brought into disorienting alignments with one another. For instance, in 'Forest With A to Z of Cardiff', Skoulding's speaker traverses one place by following the textual directions for getting about in another:

From the station I turn right and right  
again into plantation woodland  
flickers of deep light  
a horsefly's drone

numbs traffic

I bring gridlock

with me and the forest  
falls in line between

nowhere and nowhere

The effect of these lines is akin to photographic superimposition, except that the images of woodland and urban streets refuse to settle in any fixed relationship to one another, resolving and melting away in a flux of sensations. Syntactical continuities partially mask spatial disjunctions, though these are suggested formally by the irregular indentation of lines on the page and ambiguities caused by enjambments and lacunae. Sights and sounds become blurred or confused as traffic noise is translated to 'a horsefly's drone' and parallel streets metamorphose into lines of sun-shaded trees. Skoulding's poem implies that it is always possible to be in two or more places at once because of the ways in which physical embodiment and imaginative engagements feed back into one another. Her speaker remarks on how her body seems to hover 'above / its mapped co-ordinates' and suggests the fallibility of maps by concluding with 'grey pulp under my thumb'. Yet, if maps are rendered as material artefacts rather than ideal projections, liable to sudden disintegration, places and their textual representations are never wholly separable, so that 'cities come and go like forests' and 'forests come and go / like cities'.<sup>86</sup> It is this elusive sense of mobility and constantly altering relations that is distinctive in Skoulding's sense of place, and which her formal and linguistic experiments strive to convey.

*Remains of a Future City* is explicit about its debts to the utopian spatial politics of the Situationists, particularly Ivan Chtcheglov's manifesto, 'Formulary for a New Urbanism', from which it derives the titles of several poems. Indeed, the idea of walking through one place whilst following the prompts of a map depicting another derives from an anecdote told by Guy Debord.<sup>87</sup> Yet, where the key Situationist practice of the 'dérive', a 'technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances', is conceived by Debord and his collaborators as a quintessentially urban phenomenon, Skoulding's poetic appropriations of this same technique effect a 'détournement' that undoes conventional oppositions between rural and urban places, natural and built environments.<sup>88</sup> In 'Preselis with Brussels Street Map', for instance, she again combines walking with an

idiosyncratic mode of mapping in order to describe the psychogeographical contours of a remote mountainside in west Wales via the architecture of Europe's civic capital:

Up Europalaan under blue  
    reach of sky                      bare feet in spongy moss  
I need a map to tell me where I'm  
not      along the avenue de Stalingrad  
   squeal of a meadow pipit  
skimming  
    over rue de l'Empereur  
tread softly on the streets              the sheep trails  
    between bird call and bleat echo  
a street folds across two languages      here and there<sup>89</sup>

There is an obvious dissonance in these lines between the way in which Brussels street names evoke military conquests or metropolitan power, gesturing towards the geopolitical frontiers of empire, and the flashes of intimate sensory experience reported by the speaker, feeling moss with her bare feet and listening to the sounds of rural wildlife. Busy urban streets merge with lonely sheep trails and the map itself ceases to function as expected, folding together the bilingual cultures of Wales and Belgium in an extended moment of spatial simultaneity 'here and there'. For Ian Gregson, this tendency to 'mingle and overlap places' tilts Skoulding's poems 'towards a sense of placelessness', something that her wry reference to the map's negative determinations might also seem to suggest.<sup>90</sup> However, it is not clear that the opposition between a stable, bounded place and some ungrounded placelessness can really hold in her version of poetic geography. Rather, it is the very between-ness of spatial relations and connections that her poems seek to embody, as well as their intrinsic dynamism, so that places are understood, in Doreen Massey's words, as 'a constellation of processes rather than a thing'.<sup>91</sup> In interview, Skoulding affirms a crucial awareness of being multiply situated in a world of global communications, remarking that '[e]ven while you're in one location, you're simultaneously linked to many others'.<sup>92</sup> Such a sense of place is, of course, particularly appropriate to the work of a Bradford-born poet writing in English in north Wales and responding to the varied influences of a cosmopolitan European avant-garde.

Even when they appear to focus more exclusively upon the spaces and architecture of the modern city, Skoulding's poems exhibit a restless proclivity for unpicking entrenched distinctions between nature and society, humans and non-humans, rural and urban ecologies. Indeed, many seem to imagine the sort of 'knotted world of vibrant matter' described by Jane Bennett, in which all bodies, whether organic or inorganic, are accorded agency and vitality.<sup>93</sup> For example, in 'Building Site', an extended analogy conflates the city's construction and reconstruction with both a forest's natural cycles of decay and regrowth and the creative energies of language. So, in this constantly recycled place, 'leaves gloss argots of glass and steel' and a whole urban quarter 'puts down its roots, / unsettling the ground / with every new inflection'.<sup>94</sup> In a sense, 'Building Site' is a poem that describes its own processes of composition, dwelling upon the mixed and often second-hand materials from which it is made. But it is also a text that imagines the supposedly inert material world of things to be animated by an unsettling force and vitality of its own, which has consequences for the ways in which poetic language is used.

Another recurrent trope describes the city's architectural fabric in terms of the human body's sensuous capabilities, as if to compensate for the 'sensory deprivation' and 'tactile sterility' that Richard Sennett bemoans in contemporary urban environments.<sup>95</sup> In 'The Old Walls', the city's physical boundaries are figured as a cracked 'skin open to the elements', penetrated by immigration and urban sprawl as 'the city runs along / fingers run along / roads and wires and into fields'.<sup>96</sup> Internal and external, private and public spaces are also confused in 'Temple', where body and city are again mutually entangled. Pursued by unknown assailants, the speaker traverses 'the curve of the skull' and 'the spinal colonnade', hinting at some act of violence that opens 'into hairline / fracture, traceries of streets / so many paths across the city'.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, in 'Labyrinth', the act of walking the city streets is depicted as an erotic encounter with the spaces of a lover's body, passing beneath 'the archway of tongues' and 'through the whorls of an ear' to follow 'deep in your veins / the bass frequency of blood'.<sup>98</sup> Sound, touch and taste predominate over the scopic drives of vision in these poems, which revitalize the familiar metaphors of the city-as-body and the city-as-text through their rich coordination of distinct sensory perceptions. Skoulding's sense of place is both multi-locational and viscerally embodied, though it insists on the mutual imbrication

of organic forms and inorganic matter in any experience of being here and there.

## Conclusion

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In *The Five Senses*, Michel Serres suggests that we ‘draw the immediate map of those senses that have been called the practices of place’.<sup>99</sup> This essay has begun to sketch such a ‘map’ by exploring the various ways in which contemporary British poetry articulates embodied and cognitive senses of place. The texts by Oswald, Clark, Shapcott and Skoulding it considers each depict very different places – the riparian landscapes of south Devon, the Scottish Highlands and Islands, the Welsh border country and the cityscapes of continental Europe. They also foreground different combinations of sensory particulars and find their own distinctive forms of expression for the body’s experiences of place. If, as Nigel Thrift argues, the very concept of place is ‘compromised: permanently in a state of enunciation, between addresses, always deferred’, the work of these four poets demonstrates the possibility of renewing the senses of place in a manner that takes account of changed and changing geographical conditions.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, part of my purpose has been to show that contemporary British poetry shares many of the concerns of cultural geographers with practice, embodiment and the more-than-human relationships through which environments and identities are constructed. Nonetheless, the poems discussed in this essay also retain a reflexive interest in the mediating role played by language, the ramifications of textuality and the textures of representation. They demonstrate that an attunement to the related processes of perception, sensation and aesthetic figuration can encourage more dynamic conceptions of places as spatio-temporal events.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> For a complex and suggestive reflection on the multiple meanings of ‘sense’, and their role in any apprehension or experience of the ‘world’, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).
- <sup>2</sup> Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 3.



- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 42.
- <sup>4</sup> Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 13.
- <sup>5</sup> In this, I am encouraged by the example of Damian Walford Davies, who announces his intention to ‘shift the borders of an “Anglo-Welsh” literary tradition, making it more fluid, permeable and trans-national’: Damian Walford Davies, *Cartographies of Culture: New Geographies of Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 17. Also exemplary in their nuanced parsing of such loaded phrases as ‘Welsh writing’ and ‘Welsh poetry’ are Matthew Jarvis’s *Welsh Environments in Contemporary Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008) and Alice Entwistle’s *Poetry, Geography, Gender: Women Rewriting Contemporary Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).
- <sup>6</sup> John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 157–8.
- <sup>7</sup> Edward Relph, ‘Sense of place’, in Susan Hanson (ed.), *Ten Geographic Ideas That Changed the World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), p. 208. See also Edward Relph, ‘Place’, in Ian Douglas, Richard Huggett and Mike Robinson (eds), *The Companion Encyclopedia of Geography: The Environment and Humankind* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 910–12.
- <sup>8</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 18. See also Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 8–12.
- <sup>9</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 138.
- <sup>10</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 130; Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), p. 154.
- <sup>11</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 162.
- <sup>12</sup> Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968–1978* (London: Faber, 1980), pp. 131, 145.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 132.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 149.
- <sup>15</sup> Seamus Heaney, *The Place of Writing* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars’ Press, 1989), pp. 18–35.
- <sup>16</sup> John Burnside, ‘Strong words’, in W. N. Herbert and Matthew Hollis (eds), *Strong Words: Modern Poets on Modern Poetry* (Tarsset: Bloodaxe Books, 2000), pp. 260, 261. See also John Burnside, ‘Poetry and a sense of place,’ *Nordlit*, 1 (1996), <http://www.hum.uit.no/nordlit/1/burnside.html> (accessed 3 September 2013).
- <sup>17</sup> Jo Shapcott, ‘Confounding geography’, in Alison Mark and Deryn Rees-Jones (eds), *Contemporary Women’s Poetry: Reading/Writing/Practice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 42.
- <sup>18</sup> Eric Falcì, ‘Place, space, and landscape’, in Nigel Alderman and C. D. Blanton (eds), *A Concise Companion to Postwar British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 201.
- <sup>19</sup> Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. Robert T. Tally Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 134. On sensory orders or hierarchies see David Howes, ‘Introduction: empires of the senses’, in David Howes (ed.), *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 3 and Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1–7.
- <sup>20</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), p. 25.
- <sup>21</sup> Hayden Lorimer, ‘Cultural geography: the busyness of being “more-than-representational”’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 29/1 (2005), 86. The term ‘multisensual’ derives

- from Rodaway, who remarks that ‘everyday perception is characteristically multisensual, involving more than one sense organ in generating an experience of the world’ (Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, p. 11). It is worth noting that humanist geographers such as J. Douglas Porteous have played a significant role in stressing the importance of *all* the senses for geographical knowledge: see J. Douglas Porteous, *Landscapes of the Mind: Worlds of Sense and Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
- <sup>22</sup> Nigel Thrift, *Spatial Formations* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 7.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 8. See also Nigel Thrift, *Non-representational Theory: Space | Politics | Affect* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 5–18.
- <sup>24</sup> John Wylie, ‘A single day’s walking: narrating self and landscape on the south west coast path’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30/2 (2005), 236. See also John Wylie, *Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 211–15.
- <sup>25</sup> For a useful commentary on Serres’s text that examines his key metaphors of knotting, clustering and weaving critically, see Steven Connor, ‘Michel Serres’s *Les Cinq Sens*’, in Niran Abbas (ed.), *Mapping Michel Serres* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 153–69.
- <sup>26</sup> Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies (I)*, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 247.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 258.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 301.
- <sup>29</sup> Charles I. Armstrong, *Figures of Memory: Poetry, Space, and the Past* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 194.
- <sup>30</sup> Alice Oswald, *Dart* (London: Faber, 2002), pp. ix, 15, 16.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 42; Alice Oswald, ‘The universe in time of rain makes the world alive with noise’, in Sarah Maguire (ed.), *A Green Thought in a Green Shade: Poetry in the Garden* (London: Poetry Society, 2000), p. 36.
- <sup>32</sup> Alice Oswald, ‘Introduction: a dew’s harp’, in Alice Oswald (ed.), *The Thunder Mutters: 101 Poems for the Planet* (London: Faber, 2005), p. x. On the concept of ‘soundscape’ see R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994).
- <sup>33</sup> Deryn Rees-Jones, *Consorting with Angels: Essays on Modern Women Poets* (Tarsset: Bloodaxe Books, 2005), p. 234.
- <sup>34</sup> Oswald, *Dart*, p. 1.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 1, 3.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 48.
- <sup>37</sup> Janne Stigen Drangsholt, ‘Sounding the landscape: dis-placement in the poetry of Alice Oswald’, in Anne Karhio, Seán Crosson and Charles I. Armstrong (eds), *Crisis and Contemporary Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 177.
- <sup>38</sup> Oswald, *Dart*, pp. 5, 10, 19, 42.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 15.
- <sup>40</sup> Peter Howarth, ‘“Water’s soliloquy”: soundscape and environment in Alice Oswald’s *Dart*’, in Neal Alexander and David Cooper (eds), *Poetry & Geography: Space and Place in Post-war Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 197.
- <sup>41</sup> Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, p. 146.
- <sup>42</sup> Oswald, *Dart*, p. 11.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 34.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 48.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 4.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 36.
- <sup>47</sup> Oswald, ‘Introduction: a dew’s harp’, p. ix.

- 48 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 239.
- 49 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 167, 159.
- 50 Roger Gilbert, *Walks in the World: Representation and Experience in Modern American Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 27.
- 51 Robert Stacey, “‘Into the order of things’: the relations of painting to the poetry of Thomas A. Clark”, in Peter Dent (ed.), *Candid Fields: Essays and Reflections on the Work of Thomas A. Clark* (Budleigh Salterton: Interim Press, 1987), p. 34.
- 52 David Herd, ‘Making spaces: an interview with Thomas A. Clark’, *Oxford Poetry*, VII/3 (1993), [http://www.oxfordpoetry.co.uk/interviews.php?int=vii3\\_thomasaclark](http://www.oxfordpoetry.co.uk/interviews.php?int=vii3_thomasaclark) (accessed 4 February 2014).
- 53 Thomas A. Clark, *Distance & Proximity* (Edinburgh: Pocketbooks, 2000), pp. 21, 89.
- 54 Herd, ‘Making spaces’. Harriet Tarlo regards Clark’s work as exemplary of the ways in which ‘radical landscape poets’ use ‘space on the page and sound off the page’ to explore questions of place and environment: Harriet Tarlo, ‘Introduction’, in Harriet Tarlo (ed.), *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2011), p. 9.
- 55 Martin Heidegger, ‘The origin of the work of art’, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 19.
- 56 Clark, *Distance & Proximity*, p. 15.
- 57 Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 78.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 59 Thomas A. Clark, *The Hundred Thousand Places* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2009), pp. 74, 19, 46.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 62 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 164, 169.
- 63 Clark, *The Hundred Thousand Places*, p. 52.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- 66 Wylie, ‘A single day’s walking’, 240.
- 67 Clark, *The Hundred Thousand Places*, pp. 65, 10.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 70 Jo Shapcott, *Tender Taxes: Versions of Rilke’s French Poems* (London: Faber, 2001), p. x.
- 71 Alice Entwistle, ‘This place which is not one: Shapcott’s shifting territories’, *Cambridge Quarterly*, 31/2 (2002), 180.
- 72 Shapcott, ‘Confounding geography’, p. 45.
- 73 Jane Dowson and Alice Entwistle, *A History of Twentieth-century British Women’s Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 192.
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